

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-13 (canceled)

14. (new) A method for treating roasted coffee beans by contacting said roasted coffee beans with flowing steam, comprising:

placing the roasted coffee beans in an apparatus which has a steam supply passage and a steam exhaust passage; and

flowing steam having a temperature of from 100 to 230°C from the steam supply passage to the steam exhaust passage, under conditions whereby the steam exiting the steam exhaust passage has an outlet pressure higher than atmospheric pressure.

15. (new) The method of claim 14, wherein said roasted coffee beans comprise whole roasted beans.

16. (new) The method of claim 14, wherein said roasted coffee beans comprise whole roasted beans and ground roasted coffee beans capable of passing through a mesh with an aperture of 1.7 mm, wherein said ground roasted coffee beans are present in an amount of up to 70% of the weight of said roasted coffee beans.

17. (new) The method of claim 14, using an amount of steam weighing at least 10% of the weight of said roasted coffee beans.

18. (new) The method of 14, wherein said steam is saturated steam.

19. (new) Steam treated, roasted coffee beans produced by the method of claim 14, having an extraction ratio of at least 35%, and a total amount of formic acid and acetic acid of less than 0.25% of the weight of said roasted coffee beans.

20. (new) The method of claim 14, wherein said roasted coffee beans have an L value of from 18 to 30.

21. (new) The method of claim 18, wherein said saturated steam has a temperature of from 165 to 230°C.

22. (new) Steam treated, roasted coffee beans of claim 19, using an amount of steam weighing at least 10% of the weight of said roasted coffee beans.